

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 32846

FOL TEL SENT ACTION BANGKOK FROM SONGKHLA DATED DEC 2, 1976
REPEATED TO YOU

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SONGKHLA 269

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PBOR

SUBJECT: REPORTS OF RTG OPERATION IN BORDER AREA EXAGGERATED

SUMMARY: DESPITE REPORTS OF "TOTAL WAR ON INSURGENTS IN THE SOUTH"
AND "LARGE SCALE" CAMPAIGN AGAINST COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA (CPM)
IN BORDER AREA, RTG SUPPRESSION EFFORTS IN THE SOUTH REMAIN MODEST.
RASH OF ATTACKS IN SURAT THANI PROVINCE WHICH CONTINUED THROUGH
NOVEMBER ARE OF GREATER CONCERN TO OFFICIALS HERE THAN PROBLEMS
WITH CPM ALONG THE BORDER. END SUMMARY

1. PRESS ACCOUNTS OF "LARGE SCALE" RTG OPERATIONS AGAINST CPM IN
YALA AS WELL AS "TOTAL WAR ON INSURGENTS" (THE NATION REVIEW
NOV. 30) ARE EXAGGERATED. ACCORDING TO RTA SOURCES AND INFORMATION
OBTAINED BY JUSMAG ADVISOR, OPERATION AGAINST CPM IN YALA CONSISTS
PRIMARILY OF AIR STRIKES AND ARTILLERY WITH MINIMAL COMMITMENT
OF BORDER PATROL POLICE (BPP) GROUND UNITS. TROOPS REMAIN CONCEN-
TRATED IN THANDO SUB DISTRICT OF BANANG SATA DISTRICT WHERE AMBUSH
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OF BPP TOOK PLACE TWO WEEKS AGO. THERE IS NO INDICATION OF A

LARGE SWEEP DESIGNED TO FOLLOW UP AIR STRIKES. WHILE THIS OPERATION IS PERHAPS LARGE BY NORMAL RTG STANDARDS, IT IS UNLIKELY TO DRIVE CPM ACROSS THE BORDER INTO MALAYSIA NOR BE DISRUPTIVE IN ANY PERMANENT SENSE. ARMY PARTICIPATION APPARENTLY IS LIMITED TO ONE ARTILLERY COMPANY FROM THE SECOND BATTALION OF THE FIFTH REGIMENT IN PATTANI.

2. RASH OF ATTACKS IN SURAT THANI WHICH CONTINUED THROUGHOUT NOVEMBER AND INCREASED AT SAME TIME OPERATION IN YALA IS OF GREATER CONCERN TO OFFICIALS HERE. THERE WERE SIX CT ATTACKS AGAINST RTG IN SURAT DURING NOVEMBER, THE MOST SERIOUS BEING IN PHRASAENG DISTRICT NOV 16 IN WHICH 13 VOLUNTEER DEFENSE CORPS WERE KILLED. OTHER ATTACKS HAVE BEEN CONCENTRATED IN VIENGSA DISTRICT. DECLARATION OF CURFEW IN VIENGSA AND REQUEST BY PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR FOR ADDITIONAL TROOPS THERE INDICATE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH SITUATION IS VIEWED.

3. LOCAL COMMANDERS MAY WANT TO LAUNCH THE AMBITIOUS EFFORT DISCUSSED IN THE PRESS, BUT SIMPLE FACT IS LIMITED NUMBER OF TROOPS IN THE SOUTH GIVES THEM NOTHING WITH WHICH TO DECLARE "TOTAL WAR". SUCH AN EFFORT WOULD DEPEND MORE ON DECISIONS BY RTA LEADERSHIP IN BANGKOK TO REINFORCE FOURTH ARMY AND BPP IN THE SOUTH THAN ON DEPLOYMENT OF LIMITED FORCES NOW AVAILABLE. IN THE MEANTIME, AVAILABLE TROOPS, PRIMARILY BPP ARE APT TO BE WHISKED AROUND THE REGION PUTTING OUT FIRES AS BEST THEY CAN.

4. ALTHOUGH INCREASED ACTIVITY IN SURAT AT TIME WHEN OPERATION LAUNCHED AGAINST CPM IN YALA COULD BE COINCIDENTAL, IT ILLUSTRATES POTENTIAL OF DIFFERENT INSURGENT GROUPS TO KEEP RTG FORCES OFF BALANCE. DEVELOPMENT OF LINKS BETWEEN CPM AND CT (WHICH COULD BE FORCED BY INCREASED SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS) WOULD COMPOUND THE PROBLEM.

HAMILTON

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